

SKETCHES OF THE LIVES

OF

FRANKLIN PIERCE AND WM. R. KING,

CANDIDATES OF THE

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICAN PARTY

FOR THE

PRESIDENCY AND VICE PRESIDENCY

OF

THE UNITED STATES.

[The Democratic National Convention which assembled at Baltimore on the second day of June, 1852, unanimously nominated General FRANKLIN PIERCE as the democratic candidate for the presidency and the Hon. WILLIAM R. KING for the vice presidency of the United States. Whatever pertains to their personal and political history has become a matter of pervading and peculiar interest.

To place before the public, without eulogy or ornament, the leading incidents of their lives, the National Democratic Executive Committee present the following brief and authentic sketches.

Their high honor, unimpeachable integrity, eminent statesmanship, and unsurpassed fidelity in the varied public trusts and duties assigned to them, commend them to the generous confidence and support of all who desire an able and honest administration of the government.]

FRANKLIN PIERCE.

GENERAL PIERCE is the son of Benjamin Pierce, who fought at Bunker Hill, served honorably through the revolutionary war, was a member of the governor's council, high sheriff of his county, governor of New Hampshire in 1827 and 1829, and died April 1, 1833, aged 81 years. He possessed great force of character and knowledge of men, was a thorough republican, was highly respected by all parties, and exercised a large influence on public affairs. On the conclusion of the revolutionary war he settled in Hillsborough, which then was almost a wilderness.

He married twice, and had by his first wife one daughter, the widow of General John McNeil, and by his second wife five sons and three daughters. One of the daughters died in infancy, and the other two died in 1837, leaving families. Of the sons the oldest, Benjamin K. was a gallant officer of the army, who distinguished himself in the Florida war; and the second, also, was connected with the army, and attained the rank of brevet colonel. These are both dead. Another died in early manhood. The remaining sons are Col. Henry D. Pierce, of Hillsborough—a farmer of great personal worth and of much wealth, who has represented his town in the legislature—and the subject of this memoir.

FRANKLIN PIERCE was born in Hillsborough, November 23, 1804. He was sent to the neighboring schools of Hancock and Franconstown—living in the latter place with the mother of the late Levi Woodbury, to whom he pays a grateful tribute for the salutary influence she exercised over his early boyhood. His academic studies were pursued at Exeter academy. In 1820, in his sixteenth year, he entered Bowdoin College, from which he graduated, with credit, in 1824. Dr. Calvin E. Stowe was one of his class. His agreeable manners, manly bearing, social turn and fine talents, made him a general favorite; and among his intimate friends were Hon. James Bell, of Manchester, and Dr. Luther V. Bell, the head of the McLean Asylum, of Somerville, Nathaniel Hawthorn, Jonathan Cilley, and James Mason, son of Jeremiah Mason. Three years were subsequently passed in preparatory studies in the offices of Hon. Edmund Parker, of Amherst, and of Hon. Levi Woodbury, of Portsmouth, N. H., and in the law school of Judge Samuel Rowe, of Northampton, Massachusetts. The productions of Mr. Pierce bear witness that these early and priceless advantages for thorough culture were well improved; while the admiration and friendship entertained for him by college contemporaries, who subsequently became ornaments of their profession, was but the commencement of that favor which he has since uniformly attracted towards him.

Mr. Pierce in 1827 opened a law office in Hillsborough, opposite the residence of Governor Pierce. At this time the latter enjoyed a wide and just popularity in New Hampshire, and this year he was elected governor. The succeeding year, in consequence of the division in the republican party on the presidential question—a part declaring for General Jackson and a part for Mr. Adams—Governor Pierce, who was a “Jackson man,” was defeated. The fruits of this anti-democratic victory were the election, by a small majority, of John Bell governor, and of Hon. Samuel Bell United States senator. The next year, however, Governor Pierce was re-elected. It was in the midst of these stirring scenes that Mr. Pierce commenced the practice of his profession. He had, to favor his advancement in business relations and in political life, it is true, the wide influence of his father; but the great success that immediately attended him would have been but transient, had he not manifested ability, industry, energy and fidelity. These won for him a reputation as wide as it was solid.

Mr. Pierce took a zealous part in politics, and in 1829 he was elected representative from his native town, and again the three successive years. This was an era in the political history of New Hampshire. It was the time when the Granite State came boldly to the support of General Jack-



FRANKLIN PIERCE.



WILLIAM R. KING.

son's administration. Benjamin Pierce, by over two thousand majority, was elected (1829) governor, an entire congressional delegation in favor of Jackson's administration was chosen, and a legislature was returned having a handsome democratic majority. The votes for Speaker in the latter indicate the strength of parties—Mr. Thornton, the administration candidate, receiving 123, and Mr. Wilson, opposition, 101. The next year (1830) the contest became still more animated and severe. Mr. Harvey was the democratic candidate and General Upham the whig candidate; and such was the success of the democracy, at all points, that their candidate received four thousand votes more than his opponent. One of the fruits of this election was the return of Hon. Isaac Hill to the United States Senate.

Mr. Pierce took a prominent part in these contests, both in the field and in the legislature, and here laid the foundation of his political influence and success. The questions in which he engaged were mostly local, but there is one that stands out, of a general and important character. A convention of democratic republican members was held in Concord, June 15, 1830, and adopted an address and resolutions that will stand out among the important political documents of the time, for their ability, clearness and soundness. They accurately define the character of the constitution; clearly show how the lavish system of appropriations by the general government lead "to wide-spread, general corruption, tending directly to the consolidation or disunion of the States, the destruction of democratic principles, and the extinction of liberty;" and they thus early endorsed the renomination of General Jackson as the democratic candidate for the next presidential term. This was the convention that resolved that Hon. Samuel Bell, then senator, had ceased to represent the sentiments of a majority of his constituents.

The New Hampshire democrats the succeeding year (1831) nobly maintained their ground—the election resulting in the full success of their ticket for governor and Congress, while they retained their majority in the legislature. "The American system of Henry Clay," say the journals, "is dead and buried in the State of New Hampshire." It was the year that Mr. Pierce was elected Speaker of the House, which consisted of two hundred and twenty members: and it shows the estimation in which he was held, that he received 155 votes against 58 for all others. He was also elected Speaker in 1832. He discharged the duties of this office with great tact and ability, proving himself to be a firm, courteous, and impartial presiding officer. Thus, in five years he attained an enviable position among his associates, and won it, not by undermining rivals, or by adroitness in political intrigue, but by a firm adherence to political principle, eloquence in debate, unquestioned capacity for public business, unvarying courtesy, and the exhibition of frankness and manliness of character. So honorable was his ambition, that while he was ranking his associates, he retained their love and commanded their respect.

In 1833 Mr. Pierce was promoted to a wider sphere of action, being elected a member of Congress from his district. He entered on this field of duty in a period of intense political excitement—indeed, in one of the heroic ages of the American democracy. The United States Bank was then in the arena, making its most desperate struggle to overcome the government and to perpetuate its monopoly, and this by subsidizing the

press, and not unfrequently tampering with the integrity of public men. In opposition to such corruption, the indomitable Hero of New Orleans was giving fresh proofs of the force of his character and the firmness of his patriotism. In these trying times, when not a few faltered, Mr. Pierce proved himself, in Congress, one of the most able and reliable supporters of the administration. He was not a frequent debater, but rather a most intelligent working member, giving prompt attention to the business in hand; still, when occasion required it, he was ready and willing to throw himself into the breach, repel the attacks that were made by the able men in opposition, and boldly defend the Old Hero in those patriotic and soul-stirring speeches for which he is so celebrated. To go over, for four years, his votes, and recall his speeches, would be only adducing unnecessary proof that he gave an unfaltering support to the policy which has met the approving voice of a vast majority of the American people. So true was he to the democratic cause, and so agreeable was he in his personal address, that the President became warmly attached to him, and often invited him to his fireside and hospitable board. Mr. Pierce also continued to make warm friends among his associates in Congress, while he steadily advanced in the respect and good will of the citizens of his native State. He entered with them heart and soul into their local political contests, and the longer they tried him the more confidence did they feel in the purity of his character and the soundness of his principles.

With such a reputation, Mr. Pierce was elected by a large majority of the legislature to the Senate of the United States, and took his seat at the extra session summoned to convene on the 4th of March, 1837, the day of the inauguration of Martin Van Buren as President. The country was then experiencing the effects of a severe commercial revulsion, the necessary consequence of an extraordinary inflation of credit, and a wild and wide speculative mania. To prevent the government, in future, from unwisely stimulating trade by a use of its deposits as a basis of discount, and to secure it from again experiencing losses from a failure of banks, the democratic party were boldly taking ground in favor of separating the moneys of the government from the concerns of the banks. Thus, the same journal that contains the accounts of the extra session of the Senate, contained letters from the ex-President at the Hermitage, rejoicing "that the democracy are uniting upon the plan of separating the government from corporations of all kinds;" and the New Hampshire democracy, ever true to the republican cause, ever conservative to preserve the good of our polity, and ever progressive to adopt a well-based experiment, in democratic convention promptly put forth a voice in favor of this policy. It was under such auspices that Mr. Pierce, after having given the last administration so constant and effectual a support, took his seat in the Senate. During his service in it, the array of brilliant names that graced it, such as had never before been seen and will not soon be seen again, made it indeed an illustrious body. Calhoun and Webster, Buchanan and Clay, Woodbury and Choate, Grundy and Crittenden, Wright and Southard, Walker and Preston, Rives and Benton—to say nothing of others—were of it; and the encounters on questions as deep and solemn as can arise under the constitution, were between the intellectual giants of the land. To serve for five years in such a school constituted no small training in civil affairs, and was quite enough to render

a mind like Mr. Pierce's familiar with matters of government in all their varied and wide relationship.

Mr. Pierce served in this body from 1837 to 1842, always doing his share of its business, and at times bearing a distinguished part in its deliberations, and during the whole period he gave a cordial and unshrinking support to democratic measures. It is not necessary to go over his votes in this body. As an illustration, however, take the action on the independent treasury bill, one of the test questions of the day. At a time when others faltered as to one of the most important and salutary measures ever adopted, which daily vindicates its soundness, and which has the approving voice of the country, Mr. Pierce's voice was fearlessly raised in its support, and his votes were uniformly given with the friends of the bill. He served, among other committees, on the judiciary, on military affairs, and on pensions; and though he did not occupy the floor often, yet when he did speak it was to the point, evincing thorough knowledge of his subject, cogent reasoning, and rare powers of debate.

The year after his election to the Senate, (1838,) Mr. Pierce changed his residence from his native town of Hillsborough to Concord, the place where he now resides. In doing this he sundered many old and endearing ties, and his friends and neighbors could not let the occasion pass without a manifestation of the respect and affection which they entertained for him; hence they invited him to a public dinner. This, however, Mr. Pierce declined. The correspondence on this occasion speaks for itself. It surely was no unmeaning compliment that could call forth the acknowledgment that in the relation of a citizen he had been to them as a son and a brother:

HILLSBOROUGH, *August 25, 1838.*

SIR: The democratic republicans of Hillsborough embrace the opportunity your short stay furnishes, to tender to you an invitation to partake with them of a public dinner at such time as may be most convenient to you, before you take your leave of Hillsborough.

In discharging the duty imposed upon them, the committee beg leave to assure you that the tender they make is no unmeaning compliment.

Your childhood was with them, and so have been your riper years. Educated in their midst, one of themselves, the ties that have so long bound you to them cannot be easily sundered; and it would be doing violence to their feelings to suffer the present occasion to pass without an opportunity of calling up those recollections that will ever be to them a source of the highest satisfaction.

You have stood by them at all times. You have been to them even as a son and a brother. Their interests have been your interests, their feelings your feelings. And it is with the sincerest pleasure that they offer you this testimonial, however small, of the estimate they place upon your character, public and private.

The committee cannot but express their regret at the necessity which is about to separate you from the republican citizens of Hillsborough. Long and intimately have you been known to them; and wherever you may go, they beg leave to assure you that you will carry with you their kindest wishes for your welfare.

With esteem and respect, we have the honor to be yours, &c.,

TIMOTHY WYMAN, &c.

HON. FRANKLIN PIERCE.

HILLSBOROUGH, *September 15, 1838.*

GENTLEMEN: YOUR letter in behalf of the democratic republicans of Hillsborough, inviting me to partake of a public dinner at such time as might suit my convenience, was duly received.

Sincerely desirous of exchanging salutations with all my friends, before those relations which have so long subsisted between us should be severed, I have delayed giving an answer, with the hope that my other engagements would allow me this pleasure. In this expectation I am sorry to say I find myself disappointed. I have received too many substantial evidences of the kind regard and true friendship of the citizens of Hillsborough to need any new assurance of their partiality; and yet I would not disguise the fact that your testimony at parting, as to the manner in which my duties in public and private life have been discharged, is flattering to my feelings—especially so, as coming from those who have known me longest and most intimately.

I shall leave Hillsborough with no ordinary regret. There are a thousand reasons why it cannot be otherwise. I have hitherto known no other home. Here have been passed many of the happiest days and months of my life. With these streams and mountains are associated most of the delightful recollections of buoyant and happy boyhood; and in my early intercourse with the generous, independent, and intelligent yeomanry of Hillsborough, I became attached to and learned how highly to appreciate that class of the community which constitutes the true nobility of this country. I need hardly say that I shall never cease to remember my birth-place with pride as well as affection, and with still more pride shall I recollect the steady, unqualified, and generous confidence which has been reposed in me by its inhabitants.

With unfeigned regret, gentlemen, that I am unable to accept the invitation you have communicated in such kind and flattering terms, please to accept for yourselves, and to communicate to my fellow-citizens whose organs you are on this occasion, the assurance of my warm thanks and sincerest interest in whatever relates to their prosperity and happiness, individually and collectively.

I am, gentlemen, with the highest respect, your friend and obedient servant,

FRANK. PIERCE.

TIMOTHY WYMAN, Esq.

Mr. Pierce's course in Congress had (1840) elicited much commendation. Of his speeches that were widely circulated was one on revolutionary claims, which was pronounced "a masterly analysis," sound in its principle and construction, and thorough in its business details. His speech on the Florida war, also, was commended as a dignified vindication of the administration against the party assaults that had been made on it. "New Hampshire," said the Boston Post, (June 19, 1840,) "has just cause of pride in her youthful senator. To a grace and modesty of manner which always attract when he addresses the Senate, he has added severe application to business, and a thorough knowledge of his subject in all its relations; and hence it is, though one of the youngest, he is one of the most influential in the distinguished body of which he is a member. Without seeking popularity as a debater, Mr. Pierce, in the quiet and untiring pursuit of public duty, and the conscientious dis-

charge of private responsibility, has acquired a permanent reputation, which places him among the most useful and efficient public men in the country. Long may he enjoy it."

In 1840 the presidential contest occurred that resulted in the election of General Harrison as President. General Pierce engaged in this struggle with his characteristic zeal and energy; and his services were much sought for, and were freely given. Though others of the sons of the Granite State, and its press, were equally zealous, yet it was owing much to his large personal influence that the State remained firm when other democratic States yielded to the storm. Though a change of rulers was effected, yet the financial policy upon which the democratic party stood remains unchanged, and is now daily vindicating itself by its quiet, beneficent, and efficient action.

It was after such a contest, in which might temporarily prevailed over right—in which, so far as platforms were concerned on the whig side, all was loose, indefinite, uncommittal, excepting only the generous promise of better times, and on the democratic side were the frankest declaration of principles and boldest discussion of policy—that Mr. Pierce re-entered the Senate at the extra session called by President Harrison. Then New Hampshire made herself heard and felt in a way that drew towards her the eyes of the whole country. Mr. Pierce's colleague was Levi Woodbury, fresh from the Treasury Department, with a large financial experience, ready statistics, and great analytical ability. Mr. Pierce was chagrined at the unfair manner in which his party had been overthrown. Democrats in that body were in a minority, and, it is not unjust to add, in the presence of a dictatorial and overbearing majority, more willing to act than to defend their action.

The debates of this extra session speak for themselves. Levi Woodbury not merely refuted the electioneering financial statements of whig orators, but most successfully encountered all who attempted to controvert him; and it is not too much to say that there was no match, on financial points, for him in the Senate, and he absolutely Waterbooded his antagonists. Franklin Pierce was not behind his colleague, and did not hesitate to encounter even Mr. Webster in the debates. On one occasion he occupied the morning hour of three days (June 30, July 1 and 2, 1841) in a speech characterized by such a scathing exhibition of facts, such closeness of reasoning, such force of eloquence, as to render it one fit to be made in such a body. This effort on removals from office was warmly commended and widely circulated by democratic journals. And if figures in the hands of Woodbury made havoc with the fancy financial statements of whig leaders, professions as to proscribing proscription, compared with the facts of the removals from office, in the hands of Pierce they made a most discreditable exhibit of whig partisan tactics. "That removals," he exclaimed, "have occurred, is not the thing of which I complain; I complain of your hypocrisy. I charge that your press and your leading orators made promises to the nation which they did not intend to redeem, and which they now vainly attempt to cover up by cobwebs."

In 1842 Mr. Pierce had served nine years in Congress. He was one of the youngest men who have held a seat in either branch, having attained but little more than the constitutional age when he took his seat both in the House and the Senate; and yet his bearing was such as to

have made its mark on the public men of the time. Gentlemen of all parties bear willing testimony to the high sense of honor, the general utility, the unvarying courtesy, that marked his course. He won the reputation—and it is no small one—of being a valuable member of both branches—prompt in attending to the business of his committees, with real work in him, and with great debating talent to present his case clearly and efficiently. This sort of labor makes but little show; but it is most useful and valuable to a constituency and the country. His reputation at that time as a man is thus concisely given in a recent Washington letter, addressed to the editor of the “Puritan,” a religious paper. The writer says:

“Of Franklin Pierce I cannot do otherwise than speak well; for it happened to me, during a short term of official service in Bowdoin College, during the presidency of Dr. Allen, to know him as a scholar there, and, while resident in this region, to know him as a senator. A very frank, gentlemanly, unobtrusive man is he, strongly devoted to his political principles, kind and constant in his friendships, venerating the institutions of religion, and, while living here, attended upon the most evangelical preaching in the city.”

It would be easy to present columns of Mr. Pierce’s speeches. These, together with his votes, present him as a politician of the Virginia school, in favor of an economical administration of the general government, of a strict construction of the constitution, and as a republican of the Jeffersonian cast. They present him as one who has uniformly acted according to fixed principles, swerving neither for sympathy nor friendship nor interest from the constitutional path, but, under the guidance of this, honestly and fearlessly performing his public duties. They show him to be thoroughly identified with the principles and measures of the great party which, for so many years since the adoption of the present frame of government, has successfully, in peace and war, carried the country onward and upward.

Mr. Pierce’s various speeches on the abolition question, commencing when first a member of the House, and continuing almost to the close of his senatorial term, will serve to give his views on the living question now before the country. On this point he has pursued but one course, and it has always been decided and frank. He has declared from the first that he regarded the schemes of the abolitionists mad and fanatical, and prejudicial in their consequences to all sections of the Union. He avowed that no valuable end could be gained by an agitation of the subject in Congress; and when petitions poured in, asking for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, he was frank to oppose the prayer of the petitioners. This object was but their opening door. He declared it to be impossible to read a single number of leading abolition periodicals without perceiving that their object stopped at no point short of emancipation in the States. Now, Congress had no constitutional power to interfere with slavery in the States; consequently Mr. Pierce said, in 1838—

“The citizen of New Hampshire is no more responsible, morally or politically, for the existence and continuance of this domestic institution in Virginia or Maryland, than he would be for the existence of any similar institution in France or Persia. Why? Because these are matters over which the States, respectively, when delegating a portion of their

powers, to be exercised by the general government, retained the whole and exclusive control, and for which they are alone responsible.

"Now let these doctrines be universally understood and admitted, and you take one great step towards satisfying the consciences of honest but misguided people in one section of the country, and quieting the irritation, for which there has been too much cause, in the other."

Again, in 1840, he thus expressed his views on this subject:

"I do earnestly hope that every honest man who has sincerely at his heart the best interests of the slave and the master, may no longer be governed by a blind zeal and impulse, but be led to examine this subject, so full of delicacy and danger in all its bearings; and that when called upon to lend their names and influence to the cause of agitation, they may remember that we live under a written constitution, which is the panoply and protection of the South as well as the North; that it covers the whole Union, and is equally a guarantee for the unmolested enjoyment of the domestic institution in all its parts; and I trust, further, that they will no longer close their eyes to the fact, that so far as those in whose welfare they express so much feeling are concerned, this foreign interference has been, and must inevitably continue to be, evil, and only evil."

Once more: In 1841 he raised his voice against the policy which, under the rule of the whig Seward men of the day, rewarded the abolition faction with public confidence and emolument, and thus held out to them not only encouragement, but urgent stimulants to persevere in their incendiary measures. And in eloquent notes of warning he predicted that, although the public mind was not then agitated on this subject, the repose would prove illusory; that there was below the surface a profound movement, receiving new impulses, that would ere long shake the Union to its centre; and he declared then that it was his pride and pleasure to be associated with such a party as existed in New Hampshire, which had with one voice and one heart been in favor of putting down this politico-religious fanaticism, and been against any interference with the rights secured to the States by the constitution.

In 1842 Mr. Pierce resigned his seat in the Senate, in the following letter:

WASHINGTON, *February 28, 1842.*

SIR: Having informed the governor of New Hampshire that on this day my seat in the Senate of the United States would become vacant by resignation, I have thought proper to communicate the fact to you and the Senate.

In severing the relations that have so long subsisted between the gentlemen with whom I have been associated, my feeling of pain and regret will readily be appreciated by those who know that, in all my intercourse during the time I have been a member of the body, no unpleasant occurrence has ever taken place to disturb for a moment my agreeable relations with any individual senator.

With a desire for the peace and happiness of you all, for which now, in the fullness of my heart, I find no forms of expression, I have the honor to be, with the highest consideration, your obedient servant,

FRANK. PIERCE.

Hon. SAMUEL L. SOUTHARD, *President of the Senate.*

The following is General Pierce's letter of resignation addressed to the governor, referred to:

WASHINGTON, *February 16, 1842.*

SIR: Circumstances interesting chiefly to myself, and with which, of course, I shall not trouble my constituents, have induced me to resign my seat in the United States Senate. My resignation is herewith tendered, to take effect from and after the 28th instant.

I may be permitted barely to remark, that having been called to public life by a constituency to whom I shall never cease to feel profoundly grateful, soon after I became of age, and having been continuously in their service from that period to the present, I feel the need of the quiet which can only be enjoyed by the private citizen, and the necessity of attending to my personal affairs and professional pursuits. Those who have extended to me a friendship always warm, and a confidence that has never filtered, will cheerfully excuse me, especially as they have better and abler men to take my place. I should, however, be mortified to believe that he who shall succeed me, either by your appointment or by the voice of the representative body of the people, will bring to the public service a more anxious desire to maintain the honor of our beloved State, or a more determined purpose truly to represent not only the interests but the spirit of her intelligent and gallant people.

I have the honor to be, with high consideration, your excellency's obedient servant,

FRANK. PIERCE.

His Excellency JOHN PAGE,
Haverhill, N. H.

Thus did a young man only thirty-seven years of age voluntarily resign one of the highest and the most honorable offices in the gift of the American nation, and with the fixed purpose of not entering public life, so as to be separated from his family, unless his country in a time of war should call for his services. And this was a period of life when ambition, the love of power, the desire of preferment, is apt to be the strongest. His future promised all this. Such had been the exhibition of talent that commands respect and the qualities that attract regard, that he might without presumption have aspired to any place in the gift of his countrymen. But these considerations did not move him. He laid aside his senatorial robe without regret, and sought that retirement which an elevated patriotism and cultivated taste so ardently covet. Such a course as this is at best uncommon, so rarely is it that office seeks the man—so common has it been for ambition to prostitute much that marks public virtue, to grasp at place.

For the next five years Mr. Pierce closely applied himself to the practice of his profession. It is doing him no more than justice to say that here he was eminently successful, and won his way to the first rank among the eminent lawyers of his native State. To those who are acquainted with the *legal* character of the State, this is not small praise. The men who fixed the standard of talent at the New Hampshire bar were Jeremiah Mason, Daniel Webster, Levi Woodbury, Smith, Sullivan, Bartlett, Fletcher, and Bell; no one of whom would have held a secondary position at any bar in this country, and any one of whom would have been a man of rank in Westminster Hall; forming, together,

an array of legal ability, which, if equalled, has never been surpassed in this country. And while we do not claim for General Pierce the all but legal intuition of Mason, who, as a mere lawyer, was the leader of them all, nor the colossal strength of Webster, and while some of the others may possibly have surpassed him in some individual traits of intellect, yet for skill and ability in presenting a case to the jury, and for success in obtaining verdicts, he was surpassed by none of them—not even by the tact and artistic skill of Ichabod Bartlett, who has been so felicitously called the “Randolph of the North,” nor by Sullivan, the silver tones of whose voice fell upon the jury like a spell.

General Pierce is truly a most eloquent advocate. His style is chaste; his diction rich and classic; his reasoning vigorous and strong; while by his brief but grand and fervid appeals to the loftier sentiments of our nature, he enforces the lesson that his argument had previously taught. His easy and continuous flow of speech pours onward in full volume, as if fed from an exhaustless fountain. His efforts are marked no less by insight into character, and uniform good sense, than by close reasoning and eloquent appeal. Hence he attained a practice in an extraordinary degree lucrative and respectable. While his associates bear testimony to his honorable manner of conducting his cases, his clients found him able, prompt, and faithful.

In 1845 Mr. Pierce was appointed by the governor of New Hampshire a senator in Congress to fill the unexpired term of Levi Woodbury, but this he declined. The following is the correspondence that took place between Governor Steele and Mr. Pierce on this occasion:

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE,

Concord, October 9, 1845.

DEAR SIR: It has become my duty to appoint a senator to the Senate of the United States to fill the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Hon. Levi Woodbury. And as I know of no one whose appointment will give more general satisfaction to the citizens of this State than that of yourself, I therefore tender to you, sir, the office of senator to the Senate of the United States from the date of these presents until the pleasure of the legislature of this State shall be made known at their next session.

Truly yours,

JOHN H. STEELE,

Governor of the State of New Hampshire.

HON. FRANKLIN PIERCE.

CONCORD, *October 11, 1845.*

SIR: On my return to town last night I found your official letter of the 9th inst. I acknowledge, with unfeigned gratitude, this evidence of your confidence, and regret, on many accounts, that I cannot accept the appointment.

It would be pleasant again to meet many with whom I was for years associated—pleasant to accede to your wishes and the wishes of other true and long-trying friends—pleasant to maintain, as well as I might be able, the interests and honor of our State in the exalted station you have been pleased to assign me. But with all these considerations urging to

acceptance, I find others, which, fairly weighed, constrain me to decline. My personal wishes and purposes in 1842, when I resigned a seat in the Senate, were, as I supposed, so perfectly understood, that I have not for a moment contemplated a return to public life. Without adverting to other grounds, which would have much influence in forming my decision, the situation of my business, professional and otherwise, is such that it would be impossible for me to leave the State suddenly, as I should be called upon to do, and be absent for months, without sacrificing to a certain extent the interests and disregarding the reasonable expectations of those who rely upon my services.

That my interest in the honor of New Hampshire, and my devotion to the great principles, the firm maintenance of which has secured to her a proud position and an enviable name in all parts of the Union, suffer no diminution in retirement, I trust may be made sufficiently apparent in every contest through which we may be called to pass in support of those principles, and in vindication of that honor.

I am, with the highest consideration, your excellency's obliged friend and servant,

FRANK. PIERCE.

His Excellency JOHN H. STEELE.

At the State convention of the democratic party, subsequently holden October 19, 1848, he was tendered the nomination of governor, but he unhesitatingly declined the high honor. He was engaged in the trial of an important cause in court, during the sitting of the convention; but when he learned that the delegates were about to put him in nomination, he obtained permission to be absent from the court-house a few moments, and proceeding to the hall of the convention, he tendered the democracy there assembled his thanks for the honor they had done him, and congratulated them upon the prospects before them, in a speech which the newspapers of that date speak of as surpassingly eloquent and forcible.

We extract the following from the speech as reported at the time :

"What he had learned before he came into the convention, as well as what had just been stated by his friend, (Mr. Swasey,) in relation to the sentiments of an assembly of delegates so numerous, so respectable, so directly from the people, could not but awaken in his bosom deep emotion; indeed, he must confess a degree of sensibility which almost unfitted him for the utterance of the few remarks which his engagements would permit him to make. Could it be otherwise? It was now twenty years since he had first had participation in the politics of the State and nation, of greater or less extent; and in all that time he had received from the party with which it had been his pride and pleasure to act, nothing but manifestations of the same partiality and kindness to him personally which was exhibited here to-day.

"Bound, then, to the democracy, not only by ties of common principles, and extensive relations of long personal friendship, but by every obligation of gratitude, he could not, of course, feel otherwise than deeply interested in all that related to the maintenance of those principles and the success of that party. Although when he resigned his seat in the United States Senate it was with the purpose of disconnecting himself entirely from public office, and from any active participation in politics, his attach-

ment to his party had never grown cold, nor his confidence in the soundness of its leading principles ever been shaken."

When Hon. John P. Hale came out in opposition to the democratic party, and the democrats put a new candidate in nomination, Mr. Pierce sustained this movement with his accustomed frankness and zeal, although Mr. Hale, from his college days, had been his warm personal friend. He accepted the office of district attorney of New Hampshire, as the duties of this were in the line of his profession. This office he held until 1847.

In 1846, President Polk, who had served in Congress with him, and appreciated his brilliant genius, sound principles, and administrative talent, invited him to a seat in his cabinet. The letter of Col. Polk is alike honorable to both. The President says :

"It gives me sincere pleasure to invite you to accept a place in my cabinet, by tendering to you the office of Attorney General of the United States. I have selected you for this important office from my personal knowledge of you, and without the solicitation or suggestion of any one. I have done so because I have no doubt your personal association with me would be pleasant, and from the consideration that in the discharge of the duties of the office you could render me important aid in conducting my administration. In this instance, at least, the office has sought the man, and not the man the office, and I hope you may accept it."

Mr. Pierce declined this flattering offer in the following terms:

CONCORD, N. H., *September 6, 1846.*

MY DEAR SIR: Your letter of the 27th was received a week since. Nothing could have been more unexpected; and, considering the importance of the proposition in a great variety of aspects, I trust you will not think there has been an unreasonable delay in arriving at a decision. With my pursuits for the last few years, and my present tastes, no position, if I were in a situation, on the whole, to desire public employment, could be so acceptable as the one which your partiality has proffered.

I ought not, perhaps, in justice to the high motives by which I know you are governed, to attribute your selection to personal friendship; but I cannot doubt that your judgment in the matter has been somewhat warped by your feelings. When I saw the manner in which you had cast your cabinet I was struck by the fact, that from the entire range of my acquaintance formed at Washington, you could not have called around you men with whom it was my fortune to be better acquainted, or of whom I entertained a more delightful recollection, than Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Walker, Mr. Mason, and Mr. Johnson. A place in your cabinet, therefore, so far as personal association is concerned, could not be more agreeable had the whole been the subject of my own choice.

When I add, your important measures in the foreign and home administration of the government have commanded not merely the approbation of my judgment, but my grateful acknowledgments as an American citizen, you will see how desirable, on every ground connected with your administration, the office tendered would be to me; and yet, after mature consideration, I am constrained to decline. Although the early years of my manhood were devoted to public life, it was never really suited to my taste. I longed, as I am sure you must often have done, for the quiet

and independence that belong only to the private citizen; and now, at forty, I feel that desire stronger than ever.

Coming unexpectedly as this offer does, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to arrange the business of an extensive practice between this and the first of November in a manner at all satisfactory to myself or to those who have committed their interests to my care, and who rely on my services. Besides, you know that Mrs. Pierce's health while at Washington was very delicate—it is, I fear, even more so now—and the responsibilities which the proposed change would necessarily impose upon her, ought probably in themselves to constitute an insurmountable objection to leaving our quiet home for a public station at Washington.

When I resigned my seat in the Senate in 1842, I did it with the fixed purpose never again to be voluntarily separated from my family for any considerable length of time, except at the call of my country in time of war; and yet this consequence, for the reason before stated and on account of climate, would be very likely to result from my acceptance.

These are some of the considerations which have influenced my decision. You will, I am sure, appreciate my motives. You will not believe that I have weighed my personal convenience and ease against the public interest, especially as the office is one which, if not sought, would be readily accepted by gentlemen who could bring to your aid attainments and qualifications vastly superior to mine.

Accept my grateful acknowledgments, and believe me truly and faithfully your friend,

FRANK. PIERCE.

The good taste, beauty, and modesty of this letter need no words of commendation.

When Mr. Pierce thus declined the appointment so honorably tendered to him by President Polk, he stated that he did it with the fixed purpose to await the call of his country in a time of war ere he again separated from his family. The breaking out of the Mexican war was a summons to him to engage again in public service. When the requisition was made upon the State of New Hampshire for a battalion of volunteers, he was one of the first to put his name upon the roll as a private in the company raised in Concord, and in this capacity he drilled in its ranks. When the ten-regiment bill was passed by Congress, the President, who had served with Mr. Pierce and appreciated his sterling qualities of head and heart, tendered to him the appointment of colonel of the ninth, which was promptly accepted. When the law for the organization of the new ten regiments was passed, the President tendered Mr. Pierce the appointment of brigadier general. This selection was hailed in all parts of the country as a happy one. "From his earliest manhood," says the Nashville Union, September, 1847, "General Pierce has been the boast of the New Hampshire democracy. From his father, a distinguished officer in the Revolution, he inherited all those qualities of courage, coolness, and energy which qualify a man for command. And he also possesses qualities as a statesman of the highest order. That he will distinguish himself wherever distinction is to be won, his multitude of acquaintances, in all the States of the Union, of all parties, will vouch."

The brave Ransom was of his regiment, and Colonel Pierce wrote to President Polk and urged him to appoint Ransom to the command. The

President, however, thought fit to do otherwise. His commission as brigadier-general is dated March 3, 1847. At this point General Low, a patriotic citizen of Concord, New Hampshire—as he stated in 1847, on the occasion of General Pierce's return—asked him if it were true that he had decided to sunder the tender ties of husband and father, and yield the enjoyments and comforts of home, to maintain the cause of his country. General Pierce's reply was:

"I have accepted of the commission. I could not do otherwise. I was pledged to do it. When I left the Senate, it was with a fixed purpose of devoting myself exclusively to my profession, with the single reservation that if my country should become engaged in war, I would ever hold myself in readiness to serve her in the field, if called upon to defend her honor and maintain her rights. War has come, and my pledged word must and shall be redeemed."

General Pierce's headquarters, for a short time, were at the Tremont House, Boston, where, with his noble and gallant friend, the lamented Ransom, he engaged diligently and energetically in the work of preparation. There, as he departed for the post of duty and danger, he took leave of many friends. One of them expressed a hope that he would return in safety and in honor. "I will come back with honor, or I will not come back," was his reply.

General Pierce sailed from Newport in the barque *Kepler*. Many of the troops on board being sick, suffered from the want of water, having been placed on short allowance. General Pierce, on receiving his allowance, mingled with the suffering soldiers and made them share his part. It was but the commencement of that universal care for the brave men under him, and uniform kindness and attention to them that was characteristic of his nature and marked his whole course through the campaign. He arrived at Vera Cruz June 28. Here he encountered a pestilential camp, and was himself taken sick. Still he was ever mindful of his companions in arms. He lent funds freely to the needy, and was often seen among the wearied soldiers cheering them on. In spite of disease his loss here was but trifling; and, after delays to procure materials which the future comfort, safety, and health of his command rendered absolutely necessary, he left Vera Cruz in the middle of the hot month of July, with one of the largest reinforcements and most extensive trains that had started for the interior since General Scott's departure. His brigade consisted of the ninth regiment, New England men; the twelfth, men from Texas, Missouri, Arkansas, northern Mississippi, and Louisiana; and the fifteenth, raised in Ohio, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, the eastern part of Missouri, and the western part of Indiana—in all about twenty-five hundred men. His line of march was beset by Mexicans and guerilla bands, determined to intercept all reinforcements on their way to the American commander, and do the work of plunder and massacre; and the object of General Pierce was, not to seek encounters with the enemy, but to present to his superior the greatest number of troops in the best condition that it was possible for him to do.

On the first of August General Pierce, at Perote, advised General Scott of the state of his command. It consisted, to a great extent, of northern recruits, reliable and willing men, and in fine condition, so far as health was concerned. He had lost but one man by the vomito at Vera Cruz, and

none by that disease on the march; and though the bridge at San Juan had been partially destroyed, the main arch at Plan del Rio had been blown up, and he had been five times attacked, yet he says he had really encountered nothing that could be construed into serious resistance. "I shall bring to your command," the General informs his chief, "about twenty-four hundred of all arms. To-morrow morning, at four o'clock, I shall leave here for Puebla, and shall make the march in five days."

General Pierce joined General Scott at Puebla, August 6, with his command in fine condition. On the next day, August 7, the American army moved forward to fight the great battles of the valley of Mexico, which resulted in the waving of the American flag over the halls of the Montezumas. It is not necessary to describe events so honorable to the officers who directed them, and to the country that sent them forth. It will be sufficient to state, in a concise and summary way, such personal service as fell to the lot of General Pierce. His whole career in Mexico, from the time he landed in Vera Cruz until he left the conquered city, was of such a character as to have won the admiration of the officers of the regular army, and the love of the men. He exhibited gallantry before the enemy, and proved himself, in the words of one of the old officers who saw him act, "*eminently the friend and father of his command.*"

General Pierce was at Vera Cruz with twenty-five hundred men in June, 1847, when, contrary to his expectations, he was obliged to remain more than three weeks, in consequence of the want of requisite provisions, while he was for more than four weeks in the *tierra caliente*, the vomito region. At length he marched from Vera Cruz with a train, which, when closed up, extended two miles. He went through a country and over a road strong in natural defences, swarming with guerillas, dogged at every step by a wily enemy, with constant alarms and reports of attacks, and was assaulted six times on his march; and yet he reached Puebla without the loss of a single wagon, and with his command in fine order. The conduct of the general in this march—his energy, his sleepless vigilance, coolness in difficulty, good judgment and skill in availing himself of the services of his staff—won the highest encomiums from military men of the old line, and elicited the warm commendations of General Scott. This march alone proved him to possess the qualities of an able and successful commander.

General Pierce was in action at the National Bridge. Here the Mexicans were strongly posted. The place furnished strong natural advantages. Across the main bridge they had thrown a barricade, and on a high bluff which commanded it they had added breastworks. There was no way in which this position could be turned, and the General's artillery would have been ineffectual for the most commanding point in which it could be placed. He determined to cross under the fire of the enemy's escoptes. His order to storm these works was admirably executed. Lieutenant Colonel Bonham's battalion rushed forward with a shout, under a heavy fire from the enemy that struck down many of his men. But they pressed forward and leaped the barricade, followed by Captain Duperu's company of cavalry. In ten minutes the enemy were in flight in every direction. General Pierce was by the side of Colonel Bonham in this attack. Both had narrow escapes. The Colonel's horse was shot, and a ball passed through the rim of the General's hat. This was a well-devised and gallant affair, and the fame of it went before General Pierce, and he

was handsomely spoken of in the army. This was the first action of much account in which he was engaged.

General Pierce was again in action at Contreras on the 19th of August. His brigade was ordered to attack the enemy in front. He came in sight of the Mexicans at two o'clock in the afternoon, and led his men in the attack. He was under a galling fire of the enemy three hours.

General Scott's official account of General Pierce is that of being "more than three hours under a heavy fire of artillery and muskets along the almost impassable ravine in front and to the left of the entrenched camp. Besides twenty-two pieces of artillery, the camp and ravine were defended closely by masses of infantry, and these again supported by clouds of cavalry at hand and hovering in view." This was the front of the enemy's works at Contreras. The gallant ninth and twelfth regiments of infantry—General Pierce's command—moved with great alacrity and coolness, and to the admiration of the army, for three-fourths of a mile, under a heavy fire of round shot and shells, to a position which they nobly maintained from two till nine o'clock p. m. As he was leading his brigade through a perfect shower of round shot and shells from the strong entrenchments in front and the musketry of the infantry, his horse, being at full speed, fell under him upon a ledge of rocks. He sustained severe injury by the shock and bruises, but especially by a severe sprain in his left knee, which came under him. At first he was not conscious of being much hurt, but soon became exceedingly faint. Dr. Ritchie, a surgeon in his command, assisted him and administered to him. In a few moments he was able with difficulty to walk, when he pressed forward to Captain Magruder's battery. Here he found the horse of Lieutenant Johnson, who had just received a mortal wound. He was permitted to take this horse, was assisted into the saddle, and continued in it until eleven o'clock that night. At nine o'clock he was the senior officer on the field, when he ordered his command to a new position. The night was dark, the rain poured in torrents, and the ground was difficult, yet the General kept still on duty. At one o'clock, in his bivouac, he received orders from General Scott by General Twiggs and Captain Lee, when, at the head of his command, he moved to take another position, to be in readiness to aid in the operations of the next morning. Such was General Pierce's service in the afternoon and night of August 19.

At daylight on the morning of the 20th his command assailed the enemy with great intrepidity, and contributed much to the consummation of the work begun on the previous day. That morning Valencia, with seven thousand troops, was defeated. General Pierce still kept the saddle, and was at the head of his brigade. He was ordered to pursue the flying enemy, and as he passed the enemy's works the scene was awful: the road, he says, and adjacent fields, everywhere strewed with the mangled bodies of the dead and the dying. "We continued the pursuit," he says, "until one o'clock, when our front came up with the enemy's strong works at Churubusco and San Antonio." Then, after one o'clock, this great conflict commenced.

At San Angel dispositions had been made to attack in reverse the enemy's works on the San Augustine road. Gen. Scott ordered him to march his brigade, in concert with that of the intrepid General Shields, across the open country between Santa Catarina and the above road, in

order to cut off the retreat of the enemy. This position was promptly reached. The enemy's line was found in perfect order, extending as far in either direction as the eye could reach, and presenting a splendid show. He was vigorously and successfully attacked. At the head of his command, General Pierce arrived at a ditch which it was impossible for his horse to leap. He dismounted, and, without thinking of his injury, he hurried forward at the head of his brigade, for about three hundred yards, into the midst of the enemy's fire. Turning suddenly upon his knee—the cartilage of which had been badly injured—he fainted, and fell upon a bank in direct range and within perfect reach of the Mexican shot. The route of the Mexican force was soon complete. Colonel O'Hara, who saw him and served with him in this battle, says "he was found in the foremost rank of battle, and through most of that bloody day he was the spirit of the wing in which he was placed."

This was the first time that he fought under Scott's eye, who, in his despatch, terms him "the gallant Gen. Pierce." That noble soldier, Gen. Worth, too, in his official report, acknowledges his obligations and expresses his admiration of his gallant bearing. Gen. Pillow, also, says in his official report, (August 24, 1847,) "Brig. Gen. Pierce, though badly injured by the fall of his horse while gallantly leading his brigade into the thickest of the battle on the 19th, did not quit the field, but continued in command of his brigade, two regiments of which—the 9th and 12th infantry, under the immediate command of the gallant Colonel Ransom and Lieut. Colonel Bonham on the 19th, and Captain Woods on the 20th—assailed the enemy's work in front, at daylight, with great intrepidity, and contributed much to the glorious consummation of the work so handsomely commenced on the preceding day." While the official reports of Gen. Pierce's superior officers are thus ample as to his bearing, those of inferior grade are not less so. An officer of the ninth regiment, writing from Mexico in 1847, of Gen. Pierce says: "I imagine I can see him now upon that black horse at Contreras. He gave us a word or two as we filed past, in a shower of shot and shells, in return for which we gave him a cheer. I saw him, too, at Churubusco, notwithstanding he was hardly able to sit on his horse, with the bullets flying around him."

General Pierce's next service was his connexion with the armistice, which the enemy asked, it was supposed, with a view to peace. He had not taken off his spurs nor slept an hour for two nights, in consequence of the pain of his knee and his engagements in the field. It was after he had been borne insensible from the battle, and had just recovered from his faintness, that he received notice of the honorable distinction that had been conferred upon him, in being appointed one of the commissioners to arrange the terms of an armistice. He obeyed the summons, was helped into his saddle, rode two and a half miles to Tacubaya, and met the commissioners at the house of Mr. McIntosh, the British consul general. The conference commenced late in the afternoon, and at four the next morning the articles were signed. The result is well known. American liberality and humanity were repaid by Mexican treachery and falsehood. On the 7th of September hostilities were renewed. The American army, after another series of brilliant feats of arms, hoisted, on the morning of the 14th of September, the American flag on the National Palace. Among them were the battles of Molino del Rey on the 8th, and of Chapultepec on the 12th, 13th, and 14th.

General Pierce's next service was in connexion with the battle of Molino del Rey, September 8th. His brigade was ordered into action by Gen. Scott, who commended the zeal and rapidity of its movement. Though the battle had been decided before it reached the field, yet Gen. Pierce brought his command under fire in such fine order as to win praise from the old officers. Here he was for some time engaged in the honorable service of covering the removal of killed and wounded, and the captured ammunition, from the field. While so occupied—Col. Riley in his official report writes—"the 2d infantry—temporarily under the orders of Brigadier General Pierce—became engaged with the enemy's skirmishers at the foot of Chapultepec." In this battle J. H. Warland, an officer of the army, writes, (1847,) that the New England regiment was ordered to take off the dead and wounded and cover the withdrawal of the troops from the field. The duty assigned was an honorable one and was worthily performed. General Pierce led a portion of his brigade before the blazing fire of the enemy's cannon with a degree of courage and daring which has been spoken of with admiration. He narrowly escaped with his life; several times the six-pounders ranging within a few inches of him and ploughing the ground by the side of his horse. He continued waving his sword and encouraging his troops till the duty assigned was performed. The cry was—"Come on, brave New England boys!"

The same gentleman wrote the lines containing notices of the New England officers in the army. Of General Pierce he writes—

"Break New England's lion spirit!
No—not while Pierce can plunge his steed
Amid the cannon blazing near it,
Wave his bright sword and onward lead."

General Pierce's next service was in connexion with the battle of Chapultepec. His brigade was assigned an important position on the 12th—the evening previous to the battle—which it was prompt to take. But the General had been for thirty-six hours previous confined to his bed and was not with his brigade. And it was owing to this illness that he was not, on the 13th, by the side of the brave Ransom and Seymour, storming the heights of Chapultepec. Ill as he was, however, to the surprise of his brother officers, he left his bed on the night of the 13th, for the purpose of sharing in the contemplated storming of the Mexican capital on the following morning. It was a most eventful night. The brave General Quitman had literally fought his way by the gate Belen to a point within Mexico, where, under cover of darkness, he was raising defences in the position he had won to shelter his corps. At this time he was under the guns of a most formidable citadel, which had yet to be conquered. It was such times that called forth the indefatigable energy of the accomplished engineers. Sand-bags were procured; parapets were completed; formidable batteries were constructed; a 24-pounder, an 18-inch pounder and an 8-inch howitzer, were placed in position—such heavy labor being cheerfully done by the men under the very guns of the great Mexican citadel. Now, one of the gallant regiments in this post of real danger and glory was the New England ninth—part of Pierce's command; and during the night, while the vigilant Quitman was overseeing these trenches, General Pierce reported to him in person, received orders to protect Steptoe's light battery, and received General Quitman's thanks for his prompt execution of the orders. At that time there was

not an officer in the army who did not expect an assault at daylight. But in the morning a white flag came from this very citadel, and gave the first joyful news that Santa Ana had evacuated Mexico!

While such was the specific service of General Pierce, his general bearing, as to his relations with his command, from the time he landed in Mexico to the hour of his departure, was such as to win golden opinions from all. From the time he left Vera Cruz until he reached the valley of Mexico, he was every rod either in the saddle or on foot. This could be said of but few officers; for, in consequence of change of climate, or of the water, or of exposure, many were obliged to take an ambulance. Thus did he share the fatigues of his troops. He attended to their wants in sickness; he was by their side when wounded or dying; he received their last requests. Hence, because he had a heart to sympathize with them was he idolized by his men. His gentlemanly bearing and republican manners made him a great favorite with all. Hence the universal testimony was, that he had conducted as a general officer with great honor and eminent usefulness. "Old Army," written by one who was an eye-witness of the career of General Pierce, and who says "*he has reason to believe that every officer of the old army would sustain him in what he writes,*" says, "that in his service in Mexico he did his duty as a son of the republic; that he was eminently patriotic, disinterested, and gallant; and that it has added a laurel to his beautiful civic wreath. As a citizen, he has been ready to make sacrifice for his country. As a soldier and commander, he has shown gallantry before the enemy, and was eminently the friend and father of his command."

In December, after it was ascertained that there would be no more fighting, General Pierce left Mexico for home. He left with the respect, regret, and admiration of all. "I am sorry he is going," writes an officer, "as I don't know of a man who would do better for the men under his command, or one that the soldiers would like so well." Another writes: "To my great surprise, I find that General Pierce will leave to-morrow, with the train for Vera Cruz. He has borne himself with great honor and usefulness as a general officer. It is said of him here, that after the terrible battles of the valley of Mexico he visited the wounded and dying soldier, and with an untiring vigilance and open hand administered without stint or measure to the alleviation of their sufferings. We all regret, especially those of us from New England, his purpose to retire from the service."

The American Star, published in the city of Mexico, contained the following notice of him on the occasion of his departure:

"BRIG. GENERAL PIERCE—Among the distinguished officers of the American army who return to the United States with the train which leaves the city to-day, is Brig. General Franklin Pierce, of New Hampshire. The Americans in the city will greatly regret the departure of this accomplished gentleman and officer, and certain we are that their best wishes for his future happiness will go with him. It is Gen. Pierce's gentlemanly bearing, his urbane and republican manners, which have made him so great a favorite with both officers and men. It is his purpose, we believe, to resign the place which he now occupies in the army immediately upon his return to his residence. Like others of different grades attached to the army, he left the endearments of home, at the call of the government, to participate in the battles of his country. He left,

also, a lucrative profession, which none other than a patriotic motive could have induced him to relinquish. The sacrifice, however, was most cheerfully met. Gen. Pierce has won a high reputation in the United States for his courage and bravery, as every paper that reaches us bears evidence. He left Vera Cruz in the middle of July, with one of the largest reinforcements for General Scott, and the most extensive trains that have left that city since its bombardment.

"In the several battles before the city General Pierce's brigade behaved most nobly, as all our readers are well aware, and the General conducted himself most gallantly at Contreras, Churubusco, and Molino del Rey, though in the first-named action he sustained a severe injury by a plunge and fall of his horse among the rocks of Padierna. During the storming of Chapultepec he was confined to his room by indisposition, or he would have been charging with his men over the precipitous heights where his gallant friend, the lamented Ransom, fell. But, though Gen. Pierce has thus honorably distinguished himself, he is not ambitious of retaining his high position in the service, and thus acquiring distinction in the army. He prefers the quieter and gentler pursuits of professional life, and we know that he will be welcomed to his pleasant home in New England with hearts as warm as ever beat in the human bosom. He will return to his native hills with new laurels, and with the prayers of all that he may long live to enjoy the company and society of those who are dear to him. Many fears, since his departure from New England, have been expressed in the public papers and private letters that General Pierce had either fallen a victim to the climate of the *tierra caliente*, or under the guns of the enemy. His friends and relatives, however, are now assured of his safety and health, and they will greet him with as warm a welcome as an honored son of New England ever received. Happiness go with him."

General Pierce arrived in Washington about the middle of January. A Washington correspondent of the Baltimore Sun thus noticed his career and character:

"General Franklin Pierce arrived here on Saturday from Mexico. This gallant officer is on his way to New Hampshire, on a visit to his family. The General is a young man, and forcibly reminds me of the generals of the Revolution—full of talent without pretension, and full of military capacity without military bombast. Once a senator in the Congress of the United States; once tendered the Attorney Generalship—the first he resigned before the expiration of his term, and the last he declined when offered. To his credit be it said, that when the country called to arms he was among the first who accepted the service offered him. The high opinion held of him by men and officers evinces the propriety of the selection and the capacity of the man."

General Pierce, though he left Mexico in December, when negotiations were in progress, did not leave the service until after it was well ascertained that the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (of February 2, 1848) would be ratified. This was in March. There was no more work for him in the field, and he then resigned his commission. This was an appropriate close of a high, patriotic, and perilous duty. At the call of the law he promptly rallied to the standard of the law, and freely exposed his life in its behalf. He did this gallantly. But war is not his profession. He

becomes a soldier only when his country has battles to fight; and when these are over, he throws by his sword and mingles in the quiet duties of private life. Such was the spirit and principle of the men of the Revolution; and General Pierce went on to the battle-fields of Mexico with the same idea with which his father before him went to Bunker Hill.

General Pierce, on resigning his commission, returned to Concord. His reception was most honorable to the patriotic citizens of that town. They assembled in large numbers, and Gen. Low acted as the president of the day. General Pierce was accompanied by Lieutenant Thomas P. Pierce, of the ninth regiment, his acting aid, and Lieutenant Gove, of the same regiment. General Low, on addressing the citizens, alluded to the object of the meeting, paid a tribute to the high motives and profound sense of honor from which General Pierce acted, described the triumphs of the American army as it planted the American flag on the Mexican capital, and concluded as follows :

“Here we see our friend triumphantly leading on his command. But this is not all we see of him. We behold the camp after the hour of battle has passed away. We behold it wrapped in the silence of night. We see the killed and the wounded, and we look for our friend. We find him unattended passing through the long line of tents, in which were to be seen the pallid cheek and exhausted frame of the dying soldier. To minister to them is the business of his lonely rounds. He visits the tents, he hears their last words, and receives their last mortal requests, and expends upon them his last shilling to procure for them necessaries which they could not, in such a place, otherwise obtain. Is not such a son worthy of the State that gave him birth?” [Cheers.] Turning to General Pierce, he continued: “I can say no more, sir. Your services are understood here; and now, in the name of this meeting, and in my own behalf likewise, I bid you a hearty welcome home to your adopted town. And in the name of all the people in every town in this State, I congratulate you upon your safe return to the capital of your native State.”

General Pierce now advanced to the front of the platform to reply. He labored under deep emotions, the nature of which could be well gathered from the tone and topics of his remarks. Although one of the most forcible and fluent speakers in the country, on this occasion he avoided everything in the shape of speaking for effect. He spoke of matters which intensely interested his audience:

“He said, whatever had been his portion of the danger encountered or exposure endured, or the long sad days and sleepless nights of those he had left behind, none of which would have occurred to him but for the remarks of the president, he had been more than compensated by the reception he had met, setting aside the consciousness of duty performed. He felt an embarrassment in addressing the meeting that he could hardly account for. He felt profoundly grateful to that Being who not only watches over the nations of the earth, but over the welfare of the humblest individual. He did not take to himself the honor of attracting such a numerous and excited assembly as stood before and around him. The gathering was on account of the great number of their gallant sons, brothers, and friends that had formed a part of his command. They had come to hear not only of those who live, but of those who, having displayed their devotion

to their country, now repose on a foreign soil. A set speech to an audience actuated by the feelings which he perceived, would be altogether out of place. It would be a sort of desecration to attempt any display on such occasions. Upon the main topic which they must be anxious to hear about, he could not frame a set speech. They wanted to hear of the ninth regiment, the glorious New England regiment, which was assembled in such hot haste, and in such hot haste met the enemy. There was not a generous or just man in the State who had not pronounced in favor of their motives. Laying aside all the ties of home, and the fair promises of youth and its enjoyments, and suffering the partings which press the life-blood from our young hearts, they responded to their country's call, with a high moral purpose that could not be exceeded.

"During the three weeks at Vera Cruz, caused by the want of mules and wagons for transportation—a delay aggravated by wide spread sickness—he never heard a murmur from a soldier under his command. A more cheerful set of lads they could not have been if they had been at home by their own happy firesides. Their subsequent exploits had been read in the official reports. He would not detail them. On the march, in the fight, everywhere, one predominant feeling animated them. The question was not who should be ordered forward; but which corps should be allowed to go forward first against the enemy. At night they were cheerful in their tents, and longing for the morning, which should bring with it the order to move forward to battle. New Hampshire had no occasion for any other feeling than that of pride in regard to her sons who belonged to the command. They had proved themselves brave, devoted, self-sacrificing spirits. And Concord, too, was well represented among them. There was Henry Caldwell, one of the bravest and most determined soldiers in the army. There was Sergeant Stowell, who was shot plump through the heart at Churubusco. As his last breath flowed he whispered to me, 'Do the boys say I behaved well? If I have, write home to my people.' Then there was Sergeant Pike, who had his leg shot off in advancing along on a causeway swept by three batteries. Two amputations which did not answer the purpose were performed, and a third was deemed hopeless. Die he must, it was thought. 'I know better than they do,' he said, 'I'll try another; and when they cut it again, I hope they will cut it so that it will stay cut. A third amputation was performed, and he lived through it. He and the others named were printers. In the new levies, the printers exceed by twenty per cent. those of any other vocations; and on account of their intelligence and high spirit, they have proved the most efficient soldiers in the field.

"General Pierce also named Brown and Swett, of Concord, as particularly distinguished; and Captain Cady and Lieutenants Potter and Dana, of the old line. Nor did he forget Sergeant West, of Manchester, who fell at the head of his column, and was always there when there was any fighting to be done. But in mentioning the men of New Hampshire, or of New England, he would claim for them no superiority over others. The present army was made up of artillery, cavalry, the old army, and the new levies, representing every State of the Union; and it was not in the power of man to say which had done the best service. To many it had been matter of great surprise that the new levies had fought as they had done. But it is in the race. He would take from the audience before him a regiment who would do the same. In executing manœuvres and

in forming combinations in front of an enemy by wheeling, counter-marching, &c., old soldiers are undoubtedly better; but when it came to close fighting, as in storming or charging, it was the man that did the work, and not the manœuvring; and in such work, the men who had never before been under fire or handled a bayonet stood well side by side with the long-trained soldier. Another cause of the success of our troops, new and old, was the conduct of the officers, who, from the highest to the lowest, led and cheered on their columns. Hence the disproportion in the loss of officers and men. Hence the loss of that most brave and accomplished of officers of the ten new regiments—Colonel Ransom. He kept pressing up, pressing up, till he was shot dead at the head of his column. The same was true of Colonel Martin Scott, the first shot in the army—a son of New Hampshire. He raised himself above the protection of a wall. A brother officer begged him not to expose himself unnecessarily. He replied: ‘Martin Scott has never yet stooped.’ The next moment a shot passed through his heart. He fell upon his back, deliberately placed his cap upon his breast, and died. Colonel Graham, after receiving six severe wounds, continued at the head of his men, and, upon receiving a seventh through the heart, slowly dropped from his horse; and as he fell upon the ground, said: ‘Forward, my men! my word is always *forward!*’ And so saying, he died.

“Having referred to Lieutenants Foster and Daniels and to several officers of the old army, General Pierce proceeded to say he had to retract opinions he had formerly entertained and expressed in relation to the Military Academy at West Point. He was now of the opinion that the city of Mexico could not have been entered in the way it was but for the intelligence and science in military affairs of the officers of the old army, mostly from West Point. Services were rendered by the officers of the topographical engineers and ordnance which could not have been rendered but by men who had received the most complete military education. The force of the Americans had been overrated. Only seven thousand five hundred effective men left Puebla to attack a city of two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, defended by thirty-five thousand of the best troops ever raised in Mexico, one hundred pieces of cannon, and the finest fortifications ever raised, in addition to the natural defences of marshes and lakes.

“In conclusion, he said he was not here to discuss any matters of controversy, but to meet his friends. Yet the subject of war was necessarily presented to their consideration by the occasion. Before entering in it, it was his belief that the war had been irresistibly pressed upon us. If he had doubted before, conversations he had had with the most intelligent Mexicans would have confirmed him in the opinion that the war was unavoidable on our part. Four of the Mexican commissioners were in favor of the propositions submitted by Mr. Trist, but they were overawed by threats and demonstrations of the mob in Mexico, stimulated by opponents to the then existing government. Even now the people will go to the last extremity against a peace. They say it is the first time within the last twenty years that they have been under any protection. They are in favor of merging the nationality of Mexico in that of the United States. They say they care nothing for a nationality which has afforded them no protection in either civil or political rights. Their rights are protected by American arms.

"Again: the course a very large number of the public presses in the United States have pursued has created obstacles to peace. Mexican papers are filled with articles and speeches from the United States, denouncing the war on our part and justifying Mexico. The Mexican editors publish them, with the remark that nothing remains to be added by them to make out the justice of their course towards the United States. On the same day that he saw in a Jalapa paper a whole page of extracts from American papers, he saw stuck up on the trees the proclamation of Salas to the guerillas, ending with the watchword, 'Death to the Yankees, without mercy!' Thus was furnished from our own country the food which fed the ferocity that pursued the army at every turn, and caused the butchering of every soldier who fell into their hands. In the office of the secretary in Mexico, extracts from American papers were found filed away in their pigeon-holes. They had been used in framing their proclamations.

"Should the Mexicans find the Americans standing together on the question of the war, peace would follow almost instantaneously. An opportunity is now presented to make peace by strengthening the hands of President Herrera, and the peace party, who have obtained a majority in Congress.

"General Pierce continued to renew his expressions of gratitude for his reception."

This year the legislature voted General Pierce a splendid sword as a token of their approbation of his gallantry in the field and their esteem for him as a man. This was presented to him, in behalf of the State, by the governor. General Pierce made an eloquent and beautiful reply. After alluding to the fact that out of the six hundred and forty men who went with him to Mexico, less than one hundred and fifty lived to return, he said:

"I accept this splendid weapon from the people of New Hampshire with an abiding sense of the personal regard which has never seemed to grow cold. May I not be permitted to say, without reference to my political associations, that I receive it as one among multiplied evidences, so far as the men of my own time of life are concerned, of something like a fraternal esteem and confidence, which it has been my highest purpose to merit, and is my firmest never to lose. In the mean time, I am not unmindful of another and higher consideration which actuated the legislature. The sword, though given to me, was designed and received as a token of the estimation in which you hold the services and sacrifices of the officers and soldiers of the brigade which it was my good fortune to command; and to them I would have the grateful thoughts of my friends turned to-day—to the noble dead; to the men who with their life-blood sealed their devotion to the rights and honor of the republic; to the gallant living, who, having fulfilled their mission amid the untrod scenes of an eventful campaign on a foreign soil, are now unobtrusively and usefully pursuing the avocations of civil life at home.

"Your thoughts and purposes in this matter are not circumscribed by the limits of New Hampshire or New England. You embrace the 12th and 15th regiments no less warmly than the 9th. It will ever be a matter of gratification to me that the three regiments of my brigade were composed of men from the extreme south, north, and west of the Union,

because it illustrated, in an hour of trial and danger, that unity which is our strength. The question never arose, during the varied scenes of that summer, on what side of a geographical line a man was born or reared; he stood upon the field by your side, an American officer or an American soldier, with an American heart; and that was enough for any of us to know. It was a glorious brotherhood. The highest hope of patriotism looks to the permanence and all-pervading power of that feeling. It is the panoply under which whatever is dear and precious in our institutions will repose in security. Over it may the stars and stripes float forever!"

The constitution of New Hampshire contains provisions at war with the spirit of the age and discreditable to the intelligence of the State, and her able and liberal statesmen have long warred against them. One of them is the *religious test*, in theory excluding Catholics from office, though practically it is a dead letter. In 1850 a convention was called to revise the constitution, and General Pierce allowed himself to be elected a member from Concord. This convention met at the New Hampshire State-house on the sixth of November. It consisted of two hundred and ninety members, comprising a fine representation of the intelligence, the political and judicial service and moral worth of the Granite State. A more respectable assembly never assembled in its borders. Gen. Pierce was elected its president, and it afforded a most gratifying proof of the estimation in which he was held by his native State. No man in it was more competent to discharge this service; and the prompt, impartial, and dignified manner in which he performed the duties of a presiding officer won him new laurels. Nor was this all. When some of the obnoxious features of the constitution were under discussion he left the chair, mingled in the debate, and gave his influence to have them expunged. Such, for instance, was his course as to the proposition to strike out the test requirement of the constitution, which provides that some of the principal offices shall not be filled except by persons of the protestant religion. General Pierce, in his speech on this occasion, declared that undoubtedly this test had been a stigma on the State at home and abroad; that he had felt keenly the reproach; that it was unworthy of the intelligence and liberal spirit of his countrymen. Indeed, he said, such were his views that with him it was no longer an open question, and rejoiced that the occasion had arrived when the obnoxious form would be dispensed with. "The great question of religious toleration," he said, "was practically settled, and settled in a manner never to be reversed, while we retained our present form of government, more than thirty years ago." The test, at least, had been a dead letter, a blank, on the statute-book. These were views that had been ever entertained by General Pierce, and no man in the State had taken a more decided stand on this question. Its abolition was triumphantly carried in the convention. And when the people of Concord assembled in town meeting to vote on the amendments to the constitution submitted by this convention, General Pierce attended, and made another eloquent speech in favor of the great principle of religious freedom.

General Pierce from this time continued in the assiduous pursuit of his profession. But he also kept warmly interested in the politics of the time; and in the critical period that elicited the Compromise measures, he once more became an active politician. His views as to these measures, which

were then pending, were expressed in a private letter dated May 9, 1850, and addressed to a distinguished democratic senator:

"I have been so constantly occupied in court that no leisure moment has presented itself for the acknowledgment of your noble speech upon Mr. Bell's proposition for a compromise of the question which has so deeply agitated Congress and the country during the last few months. I appreciate your kind remembrance of me personally. As a New Hampshire man, I hear your name pronounced only with pride; as an American citizen, I acknowledge with gratitude the eminent public services that have signalized your course along the whole line of your useful life.

"It grieves me to observe that the spirit of concession and honorable compromise is not stronger and more pervading at Washington. I have no apprehension that the disruption of this Union is at hand; but I foresee consequences appalling in this daily use of the terms 'North and South,' as terms of antagonism. What are the North and South but component parts of our common country—parts which should be regarded as absolutely inseparable; not united merely by reciprocal rights and obligations arising under the constitution, but bound together by ties of affection, common interest, and reciprocal respect; recognising at all times, and above all, that noble band of brotherhood which concentrated the genius, and courage, and patriotism that achieved our independence—that has sustained the country in all its trials; that bond to which the republic is indebted for a career more rapid and wonderful than any that has hitherto marked the march of civilization and civil liberty?

"You have doubtless observed that a great effort is being made to give currency to the impression that the opinions and sentiments advanced by yourself find nothing like a general response in New England. I do not believe the fact to be so in this State. Our people set a value upon the Union which language cannot express; they look for a compromise—expect a compromise—conceived in a spirit of justice and patriotism, firmly and manfully."

On the 20th of November, at Manchester, he took part in one of the most interesting and important political meetings ever held in New Hampshire. It was one of the Union meetings which were called at that period in order to give a pledge of fidelity to the Union, the constitution, and the laws. A delegation of five hundred went from Concord to attend this gathering. On being introduced by the president, General Pierce was received with the most enthusiastic cheers. Though he disclaimed any purpose of making a regular address, yet he made an eloquent appeal in behalf of a performance of constitutional duties. In the course of it the following scene occurred:

"He was in the United States Senate when that word was heard for the first time on that floor, and never should he forget the thrill of horror it sent through that body. A deep and solemn pause ensued, and senators shuddered as they slowly turned their eyes upon the bold author of the appalling suggestion. But he had now lived to hear hisses while one of the secretaries of the meeting was reading a resolution in favor of union. [This remark drew hisses, and General Pierce proceeded:] They hiss again. Let them be met by argument; let the discussion come, and he that is defeated must go to the wall and yield the question. That is the way to manage such matters in a free country. There must be no breaking up of the government in case of defeat. If we are precipitated

into a war by fanaticism, we cannot conquer. Both sections of the country may be immolated. Neither could come out of the contest short of ruin. It was said that we of the North could bring two men into the field for every one that the South could muster; but it would be found, when the trial should come, that the man who now makes that boast would not be one of the two men, who was to go forth to meet even the one man from the South. [Great cheering.]

“General Pierce said the men then in the hall who had abandoned themselves to the infatuation of disunion sentiments would probably live to regret and repent of their present course. In the coming days of decrepitude, when the infirmities of age shall have crept upon them, they would gather their children around them, and confess how they were once betrayed into moral treason, and as a legacy say to them, ‘Stand by your Union, and stand by your country.’ He said he deemed it unnecessary to go into a formal argument in support of the Union. The resolutions embraced all that could be said on that subject. When the Compromise was first proposed in Congress, he had no doubt that the Union would go down unless the measures recommended were carried. The defeat of the first attempt overwhelmed him with apprehension, understanding that the Compromise was intended to give to the South a sense of greater security for one of their rights than they felt they had for some time past possessed. Who did not deplore slavery? But what sound-thinking mind regarded that as the only evil which could rest upon the land? The men who would dissolve the Union did not hate or deplore slavery more than he did; but even with it, we had lived in peace, prosperity, and security, from the foundation of our institutions to the present time. If the constitution provided for the return of fugitive slaves, it should be done. That was what he wanted to do; that was what our fathers agreed we should do; and that was what the friends of the Union established by them wanted to do. [Hisses.] There, said General P., are the arguments of the ‘higher law,’ I suppose.”

It was in connexion with these measures that the New Hampshire democracy made a bold movement as to their candidate for governor, Mr. Atwood. After he had been long in nomination, and within three weeks of the election, it was ascertained that he had written letters in favor of a repeal of one of these measures which were acceptable to the free-soil party. Prompt action was taken; the same convention that put Mr. Atwood in nomination was reassembled; a new candidate was elected; and though the democratic party did not succeed in electing him by the people, yet he was elected by the legislature. General Pierce had an important agency in this movement. Though Mr. Atwood had long been his fellow-townsmen and always a personal friend, yet the General prosecuted an active canvass against him, and contributed more than any other man to effect his overthrow. This year (1852) the democracy have been again victorious—the bold movement of the succeeding year having been sustained. A jubilee was held by the Manchester democracy on the occasion of this renewed triumph, to which General Pierce was invited. His reply was as follows:

CONCORD, *March 16, 1852.*

MY DEAR SIR: Your letter of the 12th instant was duly received. I yield with extreme reluctance to circumstances, which deny me the pleasure of participating in your jubilee. The victory seems to lack no

element of completeness. It is the triumph of right over wrong—of the democracy single-handed over all factions and all combinations—of fidelity to the constitution and the Union over virtual treason to both. Present my thanks to the Committee of Arrangements, my congratulations to the meeting, and with them, if you please, the subjoined sentiment. In haste, your friend,

FRANK. PIERCE.

HON. SAMUEL H. AYER.

“The Compromise Measures of 1850 and the New Hampshire Democracy: Upon the former, the latter have fixed the seal of their emphatic approbation. No North, no South, no East, no West, under the constitution; but a sacred maintenance of the common bond and true devotion to the common brotherhood.”

In January, 1852, the democracy of New Hampshire in convention presented General Pierce as the democratic candidate for the presidency. This elicited the following letter of declination:

CONCORD, *January 12, 1852.*

MY DEAR SIR: I take the liberty to address you, because no channel more appropriate occurs to me through which to express my thanks to the convention over which you presided on the 8th instant, and to the masses there represented.

I am far from being insensible to the steady and generous confidence so often manifested towards me by the people of this State; and although the object indicated in the resolution, having particular reference to myself, be not one of desire on my part, the expression is not on that account less gratifying.

Doubtless the spontaneous and just appreciation of an intelligent people is the best earthly reward for earnest and cheerful services rendered to one's State and country; and while it is a matter of unfeigned regret that my life has been so barren of usefulness, I shall ever hold this and similar tributes among my most cherished recollections.

To these my sincere and grateful acknowledgments I desire to add, that the same motives which induced me several years ago to retire from public life, and which since that time have controlled my judgment in this respect, now impel me to say, that the use of my name, in any event, before the Democratic National Convention at Baltimore, to which you are a delegate, would be utterly repugnant to my tastes and wishes. I am, with the highest respect and esteem, your friend,

FRANK. PIERCE.

HON. CHAS. G. ATHERTON, *Nashville, N. H.*

The last letter of General Pierce before the meeting of the National Convention was the following, addressed to Colonel Lally, of New Hampshire:

TREMONT HOUSE, BOSTON, *May 27, 1852.*

* * * * *

I intended to speak to you more fully upon the subject of the Compromise measures than I had an opportunity to do. The importance of the action of the convention upon this question cannot be over-estimated. I believe there will be no disposition on the part of the South to press reso-

lutions unnecessarily offensive to the sentiments of the North. But can we say as much on our side? Will the North come cheerfully up to the mark of constitutional right? If not, a breach in our party is inevitable. The matter should be met at the threshold, because it rises above party, and looks at the very existence of the confederacy.

The sentiment of no one State is to be regarded upon this subject; but having fought the battle in New Hampshire upon the fugitive-slave law, and upon what we believed to be the ground of constitutional right, we should, of course, desire the approval of the democracy of the country. What I wish to say to you is this: If the Compromise measures are not to be substantially and firmly maintained, the plain rights secured by the constitution will be trampled in the dust. What difference can it make to you or me, whether the outrage shall seem to fall on South Carolina, or Maine, or New Hampshire? Are not the rights of each equally dear to us all? I will never yield to a craven spirit, that, from considerations of policy, would endanger the Union. Entertaining these views, the action of the convention must, in my judgment, be vital. If we of the North, who have stood by the constitutional rights of the South, are to be abandoned to any time-serving policy, the hopes of democracy and of the Union must sink together. As I told you, my name will not be before the convention; but I cannot help feeling that what there is to be done will be important beyond men and parties—transcendently important to the hopes of democratic progress and civil liberty. Your friend,

FRANK. PIERCE.

Notwithstanding General Pierce's repeated declinations of the great honor of a nomination for the presidency, yet this was destined to fall to his lot. His name had been presented not only by New Hampshire, but by presses and statesmen in other parts of the Union, previous to the Baltimore Democratic National Convention. This body was one of the most able and patriotic representations of the party that ever assembled in council. When it was found that neither of the distinguished statesmen whose names had been brought into the convention could receive the nomination, and that the common sacrifice of preferences would be required by the friends of all, then the high character, distinguished services, and acknowledged qualifications of General Pierce pointed him out as a fit candidate for the great American office which ought neither to be sought nor declined. Virginia, the mother of States and the birth-place of the Father of Democracy, first gave her vote for General Pierce. Other States followed. And the nomination was made amidst an enthusiasm which has been rarely equalled and which could not be surpassed. It was made not only in a spirit of wise statesmanship but of compromise, conciliation and union. It was thus that this true and modest son of the Granite State was made the standard-bearer of the national democratic party.

The convention appointed a committee consisting of Colonel Barbour, of Virginia, Hon. J. Thompson, of Mississippi, Hon. Alpheus Felch, of Michigan, and Hon. P. Soulé, of Louisiana, to acquaint General Pierce of his nomination. This committee waited on the General at his residence in Concord, New Hampshire, and delivered to him the following letter:

CONCORD, *June 17, 1852.*

SIR: A National Convention of the democratic republican party, which met in Baltimore the first Tuesday in June, unanimously nominated you as a candidate for the high trust of President of the United States. We have been delegated to acquaint you with the nomination, and earnestly to request that you will accept it. Persuaded as we are that this office should not be pursued by an unchastened ambition, it can never be refused by a dutiful patriotism.

The circumstances under which you will be presented for the canvass of your countrymen are propitious to the interests which the constitution intrusts to our federal Union, and must be auspicious to your own fame. You come before the people without the impulse of personal wishes, and free from all selfish expectations. You are identified with none of the distractions which have recently disturbed our country, whilst you are known to be faithful to the constitution, to all its guarantees and compromises. You will be free to exert your tried abilities within the path of duty in protecting that repose we happily enjoy, and in giving efficacy and control to those cardinal principles that have already illustrated the party which has selected you as its leader—principles that regard the security and prosperity of the whole country and the paramount power of its laws as indissolubly associated with the perpetuity of our civil and religious liberties.

The convention did not pretermitt the duty of reiterating those principles, and you will find them prominently set forth in the resolutions it adopted. To these we respectfully invite your attention.

It is firmly believed that to your talents and patriotism the security of our holy Union, with its expanded and expanding interests, may be wisely trusted, and that, amid all the perils which may assail the constitution, you will have the heart to love and the arm to defend it.

With congratulations to you and the country upon this demonstration of its exalted regard, and the patriot hopes that cluster over it, we have the honor to be, with all respect, your fellow-citizens,

J. S. BARBOUR,
J. THOMPSON,
ALPHEUS FELCH,
PIERRE SOULE.

HON. FRANKLIN PIERCE, of New Hampshire.

To this beautiful and appropriate letter, General Pierce made the following admirable reply:

CONCORD, N. H., *June 17, 1852.*

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to acknowledge your personal kindness in presenting to me this day your letter officially informing me of my nomination by the Democratic National Convention as a candidate for the presidency of the United States.

The surprise with which I received the intelligence of the nomination was not unmingled with painful solicitude, and yet it is proper for me to say that the manner in which it was conferred was peculiarly gratifying. The delegation from New Hampshire, with all the glow of State pride and all the warmth of personal regard, would not have submitted my name to the convention, nor would they have cast a vote for me, under circumstances other than those which occurred.

I shall always cherish with pride and gratitude the recollection of the fact that the voice which first pronounced for me, and pronounced alone, came from the mother of States—a pride and gratitude rising far above any consequences that can betide me personally.

May I not regard it as a fact pointing to the overthrow of sectional jealousies, and looking to the perennial life and vigor of a Union cemented by the blood of those who have passed to their reward—a Union wonderful in its formation, boundless in its hopes, amazing in its destiny! I accept the nomination, relying upon an abiding devotion to the interests, the honor, and the glory of our whole country, but, beyond and above all, upon a Power superior to all human might—a Power which, from the first gun of the Revolution, in every crisis through which we have passed, in every hour of our acknowledged peril, when the dark clouds have shut down around us, has interposed as if to baffle human wisdom, outnarch human forecast, and bring out of darkness the rainbow of promise. Weak myself, faith and hope repose there in security. I accept the nomination upon the platform adopted by the convention, not because this is expected of me as a candidate, but because the principles it embraces command the approbation of my judgment; and with them I believe I can safely say there has been no word nor act of my life in conflict.

I have only to tender my grateful acknowledgments to you, gentlemen, to the convention of which you were members, and to the people of our common country.

I am, with the highest respect, your most obedient servant,

FRANK. PIERCE.

Hon. J. S. BARBOUR,
J. THOMPSON,
ALPHEUS FELCH,
PIERRE SOULE.

The above imperfect sketch will serve to recall the principal points of the career of FRANKLIN PIERCE. Since the death of Levi Woodbury, he has stood foremost in the ranks of the democracy of New England. He attained this position by an able, open, steadfast adherence to principle; by proving himself more than equal to every station he has occupied; by serving his native State with reputation in the halls of legislation, and his country with gallantry and a spirit of self-sacrifice on the fields of battle; by proving himself to be a thorough and consistent republican, a judicious legislator, and a true friend to the constitution of his country. He now stands before the nation as the embodiment of the nationality of the great party by whom he is supported. He bears about him in his own past brilliant career, in the antecedents of the democratic party, and in the enthusiastic action of its representatives in convention, a pledge, if elected, to uphold unflinchingly the great American cause of the UNION, the CONSTITUTION, and the LAWS; and on this grand basis to speed on the country in its destined career of FREEDOM and PROGRESS.

WILLIAM R. KING.

WILLIAM RUFUS KING is a native of North Carolina. He was born on the 7th of April, 1786. His father, William King, was one of three brothers, whose ancestor on the paternal side, coming from the north of Ireland, settled at an early day on James river, in the colony of Virginia. Their mother was descended from a Huguenot family which had been driven from France by the revocation of the edict of Nantes.

At the time of the Revolution the grandfather was too aged and infirm to participate in that arduous struggle; but he and his three sons were zealous and devoted whigs, (when that term meant something,) and the latter did good and effective service in the glorious cause. The eldest brother commanded a company of State troops, the youngest held a captain's commission in the continental army, and William, the father of Colonel King, *took his position in the State line as a common soldier*, by the side of some of the best and most patriotic men in the State. During the whole revolutionary war North Carolina was fighting-ground; and whether grappling with the tories or engaged with the myrmidons of Britain, none made greater sacrifices or met more dangers than did the gallant family of Kings.

The war over and independence secured, the father of the subject of our sketch, a planter in independent circumstances, devoted himself to the rearing and education of his children. At the early age of twelve years William R. King was sent to the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill. On leaving that institution, where his attention to his studies, and uniformly correct and gentlemanly deportment, had commanded the respect and regard of his fellows and the approbation of the professors, he entered the law office of William Duff, a distinguished lawyer, residing in the town of Fayetteville, North Carolina, and in the autumn of 1805 obtained a license to practise in the superior courts of the State. In 1806 he was elected a member of the legislature of the State from the county of Sampson, in which he was born. He was again elected the year following; but, on the meeting of the legislature, he was chosen solicitor by that body, and resigned his seat. Colonel King continued in the practice of his profession until he was elected a member of Congress from the Wilmington district, in August, 1810, when he was but little more than twenty-four years of age; but, as his predecessor's term did not expire before the 4th of March, 1811, Colonel King did not take his seat in the Congress of the United States until the autumn of that year, being the first session of the twelfth Congress. This was a most important period in the history of the country. The governments of England and France had for years rivalled each other in acts destructive of the neutral rights, and ruinous to the commerce of the United States. Every effort had been made—but in vain—to procure an abandonment of orders in council on the one hand, and decrees on the other, which had nearly cut up the commerce of the country by the roots, and a large majority of the people felt that to submit longer to such gross violations of

their rights as a neutral nation would be degrading, and they called upon the government to protect those rights, even at the hazard of a war. In this state of things Colonel King took his seat in the House of Representatives and unhesitatingly ranged himself on the side of the bold and patriotic spirits in that body who had determined to repel aggression, come from what quarter it might, and to maintain the rights and the honor of the country. The withdrawal of the Berlin and Milan decrees by France, while England refused to abandon her orders in council, put an end to all hesitation as to which of those powers should be met in deadly strife. In June, 1812, war was declared against England, Mr. King advocating and voting for the declaration. He continued to represent his district in Congress during the continuance of the war, sustaining with all his power every measure deemed necessary to enable the government to prosecute it to a successful termination; and not until the rights of the country were vindicated and secured, and peace restored to the land, did he feel at liberty to relinquish the highly responsible position in which his confiding constituents had placed him. In the spring of 1816 Colonel King resigned his seat in the House of Representatives, and accompanied William Pinckney, of Maryland, as secretary of legation, first to Naples, and then to St. Petersburg, to which courts Mr. Pinckney had been appointed minister plenipotentiary. Colonel King remained abroad not quite two years, having in that time visited the greater portion of Europe, making himself acquainted with the institutions of various governments, and the condition of their people. On his return to the United States he determined to move to the Territory of Alabama, which determination he carried into effect in the winter of 1818-'19, and fixed his residence in the county of Dallas, where he still resides. A few months after Colonel King arrived in the Territory—Congress having authorized the people to form a constitution and establish a State government—he was elected a member of the convention. Colonel King was an active, talented, and influential member of that body, was placed on the committee appointed to draught a constitution, and was also selected by the general committee, together with Judge Taylor, now of the State of Mississippi, and Judge Henry Hitchcock—now no more—to reduce it to form, in accordance with the principles and provisions previously agreed on. This duty they performed in a manner satisfactory to the committee. The constitution thus prepared was submitted to the convention, and adopted with but slight alterations.

On the adjournment of the convention Colonel King returned to his former residence in North Carolina, where most of his property still was, and, having made his arrangements for its removal, set out on his return for Alabama. On reaching Milledgeville, in the State of Georgia, he received a letter from Governor Bibb, of Alabama, informing him that he had been elected a senator in the Congress of the United States, and that the certificate of his election had been transmitted to the city of Washington. This was the first intimation which Colonel King had that his name even had been presented to the legislature for that high position; and injuriously as it would affect his private interests—in the then condition of his affairs—he did not hesitate to accept the honor so unexpectedly conferred upon him, and, leaving his people to pursue their way to Alabama, he retraced his steps, and reached the city of Washington a few days before the meeting of Congress. His colleague, the Hon. John W. Walker, had arrived before him.

Alabama was admitted as a State, and her senators, after taking the oath to support the constitution of the United States, were required to draw for their term of service, when Major Walker drew six years and Colonel King four. At the time that Alabama became a State of the Union the indebtedness of her citizens for lands sold by the United States, under what was known as the credit system, was nearly twelve millions of dollars. It was perfectly apparent that this enormous sum could not be paid, and that an attempt to enforce the payment could only result in ruin to her people. Congress became satisfied that the mode heretofore adopted for the disposal of the public domain was wrong, and a law was passed reducing the minimum price from two to one dollar and twenty-five cents the acre, with cash payments. This change was warmly advocated by senators Walker and King.

At the next session a law was passed authorizing the purchasers of public lands, under the credit system, to relinquish to the government a portion of their purchase, and to transfer the amount paid on the part relinquished, so as to make complete payment on the part retained. At a subsequent session another law was passed, authorizing the original purchasers of the lands so relinquished to enter them at a fixed rate, much below the price at which they had been originally sold. To the exertions of senators King and Walker, Alabama is mainly indebted for the passage of these laws, which freed her citizens from the heavy debt which threatened to overwhelm them with ruin, and also enabled them to secure their possessions upon reasonable terms.

Colonel King was elected a senator in 1823, in 1828, in 1834, and in 1840. His firm but conciliatory course insured for him the respect and confidence of the Senate, and he was repeatedly chosen to preside over that body as President *pro tem.*, the duties of which position he discharged in a manner so satisfactory, that at the close of each session a resolution was adopted, without a dissenting voice, tendering him the thanks of the body for the ability and impartiality with which he had discharged those duties. In the spring of 1844 Colonel King was offered the situation of minister to France, which he declined, as he had, on previous occasions, refused to accept other diplomatic situations which had been tendered to him, preferring, as he declared, to be a senator from Alabama to any office which could be conferred on him by the general government. At this time the proposition for the annexation of Texas was pending, and there was but too much reason to believe that the British government was urging that of France to unite with her in a protest against such annexation. It was, therefore, of the highest importance to prevent, if possible, such joint protest as, should it be made, must have inevitably resulted in producing hostilities with one or both of these powers; for no one for a moment believed that the government of the United States would be deterred from carrying out a measure which she considered essential to her interests, from any apprehension of consequences which might result from any combination of the powers of Europe. Colonel King was a decided advocate of the annexation of Texas; and when urged by the President and many of his friends in Congress to accept the mission, he consented, under these circumstances, to give up his seat in the Senate. Colonel King, feeling the importance of prompt action, did not even return to his home to arrange his private affairs, but repaired at once to New York and took passage for

Havre. Arriving in Paris, he obtained an audience of the King, presented his credentials, and at once entered upon the object of his mission. After frequent conferences with the King of the French, who had kindly consented that he might discuss the subject with him, without going through the usual routine of communicating through the Foreign Office, Colonel King succeeded in convincing his Majesty that the contemplated protest, while it would not arrest the proposed annexation, would engender on the minds of the American people a feeling of hostility towards France, which would operate most injuriously to the interests of both countries, now united by the closest bonds of friendship; and his Majesty ultimately declared that "he would do nothing hostile to the United States, or which could give to her just cause of offence." The desired object was accomplished. England was not in a condition to act alone, and all idea of a protest was abandoned. Colonel King remained in France until the autumn of 1846, dispensing a liberal hospitality to his countrymen and others, and receiving from those connected with the government, and a large circle of the most distinguished individuals in Paris, the kindest attention. He returned to the United States in November, 1846, having requested and obtained the permission of the President to resign his office.

¶ In 1848 the Hon. Arthur P. Bagby was appointed minister plenipotentiary to Russia, and resigned his seat in the Senate of the United States. Colonel King was appointed by the governor of Alabama to fill the vacancy thus created; and in 1849—the term for which he was appointed having expired—he was elected by the legislature for a full term of six years. In 1850, on the death of General Taylor, the President of the United States, Mr. Fillmore, the Vice President, succeeded to that high office, and Colonel King was chosen by the unanimous vote of the Senate President of that body, which places him in the second highest office in the government. Colonel King has ever been a decided republican of the Jeffersonian school. He has, during his whole political life, opposed the exercise of implied powers on the part of the general government; unless palpably and plainly necessary to carry into effect an expressly granted power—firmly impressed with the belief, as he has often declared, that the security and harmony, if not the very existence, of the federal government, was involved in adhering to a strict construction of the constitution.

In all the relations of life Colonel King has maintained a spotless reputation. His frank and confiding disposition, his uniform courtesy and kindness, have endeared him to numerous friends, and commanded for him the respect and confidence of all who have had the pleasure of his acquaintance.

Colonel King is about six feet high, remarkably erect in figure, and is well proportioned. Brave and chivalrous in character, his whole bearing impresses even strangers with the conviction that they are in the presence of a finished gentleman. His fine colloquial powers, and the varied and extensive information which he possesses, render him a most interesting companion.